



The Capital Connection

May 12, 2014

State Board approves draft rules for 24-credit diploma

At its meeting in Kennewick last Thursday, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved draft rules that will be published soon in the [Washington State Register](#) (look for the latest filing at the top of the list). The initial filing can be found [here](#). A public hearing is scheduled July 9 in Spokane at ESD 101, and written comments will be accepted.

The 2014 legislature passed [E2SSB 6552](#) which, among several changes, authorized the SBE to implement a 24-credit diploma, starting with the graduating class of 2019. School districts were given the option of requesting an extension to 2020 or 2021 from the requirements, and the State Board cannot deny the request. The draft rules specify what districts will need to provide in their notice to the SBE, including a board resolution signed by the board president or board chair.

The draft rules were shared at the May 7 meeting following some informal meetings with stakeholders. Board members made suggestions, and a few changes were incorporated into the draft rules based on member input. The draft rules prior to Board member changes can be found [here](#), starting on page 13.

Acting on an amendment offered by board member Peter Maier, a former Seattle school director, the SBE agreed to strike a requirement for districts to submit their requests for an extension by May 1, 2015. As amended, the proposed rules will not include a specific date to submit an application for an extension to graduating classes of 2020 or 2021.

The Board also changed a requirement for school districts seeking a waiver from CTE course equivalency requirements from “affirm” to “demonstrate,” based on public comments from Tim Knue, executive director of the Washington Association of Career and Technical Education.

Elements of the Proposed Graduation Requirement Rules

- **Extending the 24-credit diploma to graduating classes of 2020 or 2021.**
 - Under the draft rules, a school district that offers a high school diploma or equivalency that requests an extension would be required to use the existing 20-credit framework for students.
 - The 20-credit framework includes:
 - English (4 credits), math (3 credits), social studies (3 credits), science (2 credits and 1 lab science), health and fitness (2 credits), occupational education (1 credit), art (1 credit), electives (4 credits).
 - High School and Beyond Plan must have a postsecondary plan.
 - The following changes made in the 2014 session would not apply:
 - Flexible third credit of math, based on a student’s interests and High School and Beyond Plan.
 - Personalized pathway credits.
- **Local determination to waive two credits of the 24 required credits.**
 - Under E2SSB 6552, the Legislature granted school districts the authority to waive up to two credits of the 24 required credits based on “unusual circumstances.” Further, the Washington State School Directors’ Association was directed to develop a model policy and distribute it to all school districts that issue a high school diploma by June 30, 2015.
 - Under the draft rules, students *would not* be allowed to waive any of the 17 “core” credits, which consist of four credits of English; three credits each of math, science (plus two labs), and social studies ; one

credit each of career and technical education and art, and two credits of health and fitness (except as already allowed in state law).

- While members questioned this focus on core credits, and some stakeholders have questioned this interpretation of the two-credit waiver, SBE Executive Director Ben Rarick stood by staff's decision to limit the waiver. He said the legislation referred to the framework adopted by the State Board in 2010 and in January of 2014, which would not have allowed core credits to be waived. Therefore, it would be in line with the legislation to require all students to attempt and pass all of the 17 core credit requirements to graduate.
- The impact of this rule requirement would be that district policy and the WSSDA model policy would only allow the two credits to be waived from the three "personalized pathway " credits or from the four electives.
- **Defining a "lab science" for the purpose of meeting the two laboratory science requirements.**
 - The draft rules pull from the National Research Council definition, which reads:
"Laboratory science" means any instruction that provides opportunities for students to interact directly with the material world, or with data drawn from the material world, using the tools, data collection techniques, models and theories of science. A laboratory science course meeting the requirement of this section may include courses conducted in classroom facilities specially designed for laboratory science, or coursework in traditional classrooms, outdoor spaces, or other settings which accommodate elements of laboratory science as identified in this subsection.
 - The definition is designed to minimize construction costs for laboratory spaces by limiting the need for school buildings to be retrofitted when the second lab science is required.
- **Third credit of math and science.**
 - The Legislature created flexibility within the 24 credits to allow a student to use a CTE course equivalency for their third math or science credit, rather than prescribing Algebra II or a specific science course. The legislation allowed for choices based on the High School and Beyond Plan with the approval of a parent or guardian or a school principal or school counselor.
 - The draft rules would add a requirement that the principal or school counselor could sign off on a student's third math or science credit *only* if the parent or guardian "is not available or does not respond to a request from the school district" for approval of a specific course.
- **Access to CTE course equivalencies for the third math and science credit.**
 - A priority for Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee and several legislators was the ability for students to use a CTE course equivalency to meet a "core" academic course requirement in math and science.
 - School districts must allow students to the ability to access at least one math or science Career and Technical Education course through high schools, online courses, skills centers or branch or satellite skill centers, applicable Running Start vocational courses, or district cooperatives.
 - The new law created an exemption for school districts with fewer than 2,000 students. The draft rules would require these smaller districts, through board resolution, to "demonstrate" that students have no ability to access the math or science course through the means listed above.
 - The draft rules would also limit the waiver from access requirements to no more than two years.
- **Culminating Project.**
 - As a result of the new law, the culminating project will be eliminated as a state requirement, starting with the graduating class of 2015.
 - The proposed rules remove the requirement to complete the culminating project from existing rules on graduation requirements. The decision will be left to local district boards of directors.
- **High School and Beyond Plans (HSBP).**
 - Existing rules for the HSBP only require a statement of what the student expects to do following high school graduation.
 - The draft rules would require that the plans include a four-year course-taking plan, created in middle school.

- Although plan requirements would be locally determined, the draft rules would require all plans to include:
 - Identification of career goals, including personal interests and abilities in relations to career interests;
 - Identification of education goals through research;
 - A four-year plan for course-taking, created in middle school; and
 - Identification of assessments a student will need to graduate.

Still to be discussed

While the SBE made a few changes to the draft rules written by staff, one of the issues that wasn't resolved was about parent notification for the student "choice" on a third math or science credit.

Board member Isabel Munoz-Colon was concerned about allowing a school principal or counselor to sign off on a student's third credit of math or science choice if the parent or guardian hadn't responded to the school. Munoz-Colon said she was particularly concerned about parent notification in languages spoken at home. She felt the rules need to be more specific to ensure parents weren't unintentionally abdicating their responsibility to school staff and that districts were communicating in languages the parents or guardians understood. The board agreed this was an issue to research and return to in development of final rules.

Another issue sure to be discussed prior to and during the public hearing will be the decision to limit the two-credit waiver for "unusual circumstances" to only student electives or personalized pathway credits. During the session, many legislators and stakeholders raised concerns about a 24-credit diploma, particularly for students that might have special needs, have English as a second language, who repeatedly fail a core course, and so on. Legislators did not discuss, nor does the new law specifically state, that the two-credit waiver would not apply to core requirements.

Districts may also raise issues about the SBE reaching into the middle school on High School and Beyond Plans or specifying components of every plan. Several districts have said this is an unfunded mandate, and there are as many ways of approaching the plans as there are high schools. The SBE brought in the Grandview School District as an example of best practices for High School and Beyond Plans at the meeting on May 8. The [Board is considering](#) what role it should play, if any, encouraging districts to adopt consistent and meaningful postsecondary plans.

A public hearing on the proposed rules will be July 9 in Spokane and written public comments can be submitted to SBE Rules Coordinator Jack Archer at jack.archer@k12.wa.us.

Other SBE meeting action

The SBE also took action on the following:

- Sending a [letter](#) to the Washington Student Achievement Council asking that all state colleges and universities require three credits of science as part of their minimum college entrance policy.
- Approved [waiver requests](#) for Federal Way, Shoreline, Sunnyside, Orient, Lopez Island, Bainbridge Island, and Napavine. In a 5-5 tie, the waiver request for Wahkiakum was denied. The district can reapply. Board Chair Kris Mayer congratulated Sunnyside for their approach to eliminating half days and the gains they have made.
- Appointed member Judy Jennings to the Expanded Learning Opportunity Council.
- Appointed school director Susan Weed (Pullman) and former Seattle school director Michael DeBell to the School Facilities Citizen Advisory Council.
- Changed the timing for submission of Action Plans (for 2014 only) for the four schools that have been placed in Required Action District (RAD I) status. Action plans will be due to OSPI by June 13 and approved at the July 10th SBE meeting. Plans that aren't approved will be resubmitted for action at a special August 25 meeting.